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## Editorial

# The people are exploding in anger at the Arroyo regime

**T**he people's rage and hatred for the rotten, thieving, lying and repressive puppet Arroyo regime is smoldering anew. More and more people are openly calling for Gloria Arroyo's ouster, with street demonstrations and other forms of protest becoming more sizeable than ever.

Up to 15,000 persons poured into Makati on February 15 in the most striking in a series of protest actions in the past several days. The successive protests are being generated by the broad united front of patriotic and democratic forces, the middle forces, opposition politicians, church people, businessmen, former government officials and other anti-Arroyo forces. Shaking the corrupt regime to its foundations, the protest actions are part of the people's persistent efforts to end the regime's rule.

The latest series of demonstrations were driven by disclosures from Rodolfo Lozada Jr. of additional information on the anomalous NBN-ZTE case and the scandals wrought by the regime's fascist maneuvers to silence him (*see related article*). Lozada confirmed and elaborated on exposés made in October 2007 by

former Speaker Jose de Venecia's son Joey on the \$130 million bribery scheme of ZTE. He also revealed irregularities in the Cyber-education, Southrail and Northrail projects and the diversion of a \$1.1 billion loan package meant for the development of the Angat Dam and housing projects for soldiers and police personnel.

Arroyo and her minions are in a fit trying to cover up the truth. They tried to gag Lozada by combining bribery, cajolery and repression, and when all this failed, resorted to an all-out smear campaign against him. No one, however, has believed their excuses and rationalizations which have all failed to douse the flames of the people's anger.

The regime's response has been to further militarize the National Capital Region in an attempt to suppress the growing protest movement. Traditional protest sites were tightly guarded. Claims that the NPA would disrupt demonstrations were circulated. Checkpoints were set up along all entry points to



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the national capital. A so-called assassination plot against Arroyo was likewise used as a pretext to pour more soldiers into Metro Manila.

Long before this, Arroyo had made sure that Jose de Venecia would be deposed and his camp's influence diminished within the ruling coalition. Arroyo's sons brazenly paid out millions of pesos to avaricious congressmen to secure de Venecia's ouster as House Speaker and replace him with Prospero Nograles, one of Arroyo's most trusted lieutenants.

The regime tried to revive charter change through a petition filed by local officials in its payroll. Pushing charter change is an Arroyo maneuver to ensure her term's extension beyond 2010. Despite widespread opposition, the regime is continuously and determinedly pressing for charter change. As in the past, it is spending millions once again to buy the loyalty of local officials, its co-conspirators in Congress and anyone else it has to use to advance the charter change scheme.

The regime is doing all it can to counter the moves of church and religious groups which are now

more strongly condemning Arroyo's corruption. The regime is likewise frenziedly trying to put out the fires that would surely rage among the majority of the officers' corps and the rank and file of the military and police who are disgusted with the regime.

The latest series of scandals deepens the crisis of the entire reactionary system. Like the previous series of scandals and anomalies, they are instructive of the insatiable greed, cunning and fascism of reactionaries in power and the rottenness of the entire system that they maintain and lead.

It has been repeatedly proven that the people are not impervious to the widespread corruption, electoral fraud, blatant lying and dirty maneuvers of the reactionaries in power and the fascist methods they employ.


The Filipino people are determined to overthrow the Arroyo regime. Most determined to depose Arroyo are the toiling masses and the oppressed sectors who are the foremost victims of the economic crisis and the regime's political violence. The longer it takes and the more pressing and violent the

struggle becomes to topple the Arroyo regime, the clearer the need to overthrow the entire corrupt, puppet and reactionary system that engenders this kind of rule.

We must further our efforts to arouse the people, organize them into patriotic and democratic parties, organizations and associations and mobilize them in all possible arenas of struggle. We must likewise prepare them for whatever violent counter-measures the regime might take, especially since Arroyo has many times shown her readiness to employ the full power of the state to suppress those who oppose her rule, just so she could stay in power.

The patriotic, democratic and progressive forces will accelerate their efforts to arouse, organize and mobilize the people in their broadest numbers to finally consummate the struggle for Arroyo's ouster. They must muster the people's anger, lead and lend direction and provide avenues for their actions and raise their consciousness about the roots of the current crisis and the means of resolving it. They must further expand the united front and encourage it to launch street actions and engage in other arenas of struggle, be militant and side with the revolution.

The CPP and the NPA fully support the Filipino people's militant and democratic actions against the Arroyo regime. As contribution, they are stepping up armed attacks against the worst repressive forces and pillars of the ruling regime. The revolutionary forces are seizing the extremely favorable current situation to further advance people's war to the next higher level, giving their all-out encouragement to the growing numbers of people in protest and leading them towards the path of revolutionary resistance against the ruling regime and the entire rotten ruling system. **AB**

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## Covering up the truth

**T**he aborted abduction by government personnel of Rodolfo "Jun" Lozada on February 5 exposed the regime's worsening jitteriness in the face of exposés of its anomalies. It also demonstrated the great lengths to which the regime would go to cover up the truth and showed that it would leave no stone unturned to remain in power.

Since the end of January, Gloria Arroyo's minions have been in a fit trying to find ways to stop Lozada from testifying at the Senate investigation on the anomalous NBN-ZTE contract. They are deathly afraid of what he might divulge that would buttress earlier exposés by Jose de Venecia III and Sec. Romulo Neri on the involvement of the Arroyo family and officials of the regime in the big-time bribery case.

Weeks before this, Lozada had already spoken with a number of government officials, saying he was afraid he would not be able to lie once he faces the Senate. Arroyo's minions knew that Lozada's disclosures on the involvement of former COMELEC chairman Benjamin Abalos and Mike Arroyo in receiving \$130 million in kickbacks from the NBN-ZTE contract would trigger an explosion of the people's rage.

Lozada had been set to testify on the NBN-ZTE issue before the Senate last January 28. With Arroyo's people unable to find any legal means to prevent his appearance at the Senate, they hurriedly forged papers to make it appear that Lozada had an official trip to London and put him on a plane to Hongkong a day before his scheduled testimony. Malacañang even encouraged him to go on a spending spree using the P500,000 given to him by Deputy Executive Secretary Manuel Gaité. Gaité claimed that the amount was from his own

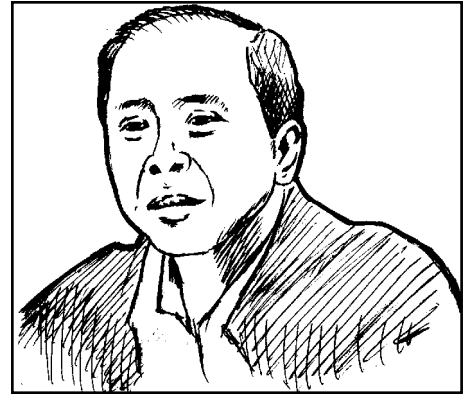
pocket, but Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita later claimed that the money had been given by private individuals. Malacañang had hoped that the Senate would formally terminate its investigation before February.

The Senate, however, issued a warrant to take custody of Lozada for his failure to attend the hearing. But when Lozada arrived on February 5, Malacañang personnel seized him before the Senate could take hold of him. A group of armed men from the Presidential Security Group and the Philippine National Police grabbed him as soon as he stepped out of the plane, without the knowledge of his family and friends, the Senate people and the media who were at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport to meet him. He was put in a car that made the rounds of various places while his abductors received instructions from their principals in Malacañang on where to bring him and what to do with him.

That night, the group brought him to a restaurant to meet Atty. Antonio Bautista who was sent by Gaité to prepare a document to be signed by Lozada. The document stipulated that he voluntarily asked for police protection and that he had not talked to any government official on the NBN-ZTE issue. Malacañang had hired Bautista to lawyer for Lozada without the latter's consent.

That same night, Malacañang was forced to surface him and return him to his family because news about his abduction was all over the media. Lozada's abductors were compelled to bring him to De La Salle University where his family had taken refuge. Arroyo's minions nonetheless continued to stand watch over Lozada at De La Salle.

The following night, former DENR Sec. Michael Defensor came to con-



**Rodolfo "Jun" Lozada**

vince Lozada to deny reports of his abduction and all the other issues being hurled against Arroyo and company on the NBN-ZTE issue. Defensor said Gloria Arroyo was already "hurting" and that Malacañang would have to manage the media. He advised him to conduct a media conference the next day. He gave Lozada an envelope containing P50,000 and insinuated that there would be more coming his way in exchange for his lying.

Lozada did go on with the media conference in the early morning of February 7, but—contrary to Defensor's request—it was not to deny but to divulge the truth. The priests and nuns at De La Salle made sure that the group that was standing watch over him would not be able to hold him again. After the media conference, they brought him to the Senate and he was put under the latter's custody.

Since February 8, he has appeared before the Senate where he pointed to Mike Arroyo and former COMELEC Chairman Benjamin Abalos as the brains behind the anomalous NBN-ZTE contract. On February 18, Lozada divulged in the second Senate hearing a conversation he had with Neri in December where Lozada had reportedly called Gloria Arroyo "evil". Neri also reportedly said Arroyo was actually at the "center of the wide network of corruption" in government. For the first time, he directly linked not only Mike Arroyo

but the president herself in the anomalies involving the NBN-ZTE project.

The regime is now in the thick of a frenzied campaign to smear Lozada's reputation and distort the truth. But when Lozada later came face to face with the regime's leading lieutenants in a television show where they all aired their sides, more than 90% of viewers said it was Lozada who was more credible. Now that another witness is set to confirm the testimonies of Lozada, Joey de Venecia and Sec. Romulo Neri, the regime will surely be shaken by a groundswell of forces convinced that it is high time they put an end to Arroyo's rule. **AB**

### **Witnesses to fraud in the 2004 elections surface**

THREE operators of the Arroyo regime involved in electoral fraud in Mindanao during the 2004 polls have surfaced.

Nagamura Moner, one of the operators from Lanao, said it was not only Gloria Arroyo who was giving orders to Virgilio Garcillano (better known as "Garci") to ensure that she led Fernando Poe Jr. by one million votes. Gloria Arroyo's husband Mike was likewise giving the same orders to Alfonso Cusi, currently the chief of the Manila International Airport Authority. Cusi in turn relayed the orders to operators in various provinces. Moner had been scheduled to testify at the Senate, but later backed out. He has reportedly surfaced because his conscience has been bothering him.

Two PNP elements, on the other hand, have also sent feelers of their desire to disclose what they know about the theft of ballot boxes at the Batasang Pambansa. The reports have appeared in the media and have been confirmed by Sen. Rodolfo Biazon. The PNP elements who have yet to surface said that they were part of a group of 20 policemen and six Congress employees involved in a break-in at the Batasang Pambansa in January and February 2005 to steal election returns from 38 provinces and replace them with fake ballots. As proof, one of the policemen said he still has in his possession six envelopes of the original election returns. The policeman said he was willing to surface if his safety could be ensured.

The revelations have prompted former House Speaker Jose de Venecia to call for an investigation on electoral fraud during the May 2004 presidential polls. **AB**

### **Supreme Court rules against ban on airing of Hello Garci tapes**

THE Supreme Court ruled in favor of a petition from the National Union of Journalists in the Philippines (NUJP) and other media personalities against a ban by the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) on playing the so-called "Hello Garci" tapes on radio and television.

In a decision issued February 15, the Supreme Court said the NTC and DOJ ban was a violation of press freedom. The court said it was the prerogative of radio and television stations to decide whether or not to allow listeners and viewers to hear the tape.

The Supreme Court ordered the NTC and DOJ to withdraw advisories issued in June 2005 threatening media outfits that their licenses and franchises would be suspended should they play the tapes on the air.

The "Hello Garci" tapes contain conversations between Gloria Arroyo and former COMELEC Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano where Arroyo is heard ordering Garcillano to ensure that she would enjoy a lead of one million votes over her rival Fernando Poe Jr. in the 2004 elections. **AB**

### **BAYAN, other groups call for suspension of Southrail project**

THE Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN) and the Gloria Step Down Movement (GSM) challenged Congress on February 12 to suspend the anomalous \$932 million Southrail Modernization Project. The call was precipitated by revelations of a \$70 million overprice by Rodolfo Lozada Jr. during a Senate hearing. Lozada, also a witness on the scandalous NBN-ZTE project, said that the overprice most likely went to commissions of high-ranking officials of the Arroyo regime.

BAYAN and GSM also called on Congress to investigate other government projects with foreign investor participation to ascertain whether these were also anomalous. Among these are the Floodway Project, the Circumferential and Radial Road Expansion project, Port Privatization, North Bay Blvd. and Business Park Estate projects.

Successive criticisms have prompted the Arroyo regime to suspend the use of overseas development aid in Phase 1 of the Southrail project and the Cyber-education and nine other similar projects.

Meanwhile, more than a hundred persons rallied in front of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) office in Makati on February 17 to demand a stop to the Southrail project and the massive demolition of communities beside the railroad tracks that would deprive tens of thousands of people of their homes. **AB**

# Massive protests for Arroyo's ouster surge nationwide

**G**loria Arroyo's knees are trembling in the face of resounding calls and successive protest actions demanding an end to her rule. The protests are indicative of growing people's unity against the corrupt, brutal and puppet regime.

Up to 15,000 people from various sectors poured out into the streets on February 15 to express their disgust at the regime and call for Gloria Arroyo's ouster or resignation. "*Sobra na, tama na, kumilos na!*" (We've had enough, it's time to act) was the theme of the massive protest action held in Makati City.

The protest action was led by the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN), Gloria Step Down Movement (GSM), United Opposition (UNO) and the Black and White Movement, among others. Jose de Venecia III, who first blew the whistle on the anomalous NBN-ZTE deal, attended the rally. Also joining the protesters were former Vice President Teofisto Guingona. Among the other groups that participated in the rally were the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, Ecumenical Bishops' Forum, Maryhill School of Theology, St. Andrews Theological Seminary, PAL Employees Association, August 21 Movement and La Liga Policy Institute.

The group of Brig. Gen Danilo Lim, Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV, Gen. Renato Miranda and Col. Ariel Que-rubin likewise expressed their solidarity. Even former president Joseph Estrada supported the demonstration. The protest action likewise enjoyed the support of big business associations such as the Makati Business Club (MBC), Management Association of the Philippines (MAP) and the Finance Executives Institute of the Philippines (FINEX). The business groups refused to withdraw their support for the protest rally despite threats from a member of Arroyo's cabinet that he would go over their tax records with a fine-toothed comb.

National Democratic Front chief political consultant Jose Maria Sison said Arroyo was "ripe for ouster" because of her moral bankruptcy, subservience to foreign interests, blatant corruption and systematic violations of human rights. He likewise called on the military and police to withdraw support for Arroyo.

Meanwhile, about a hundred members of the Gabriela Women's Party staged a simultaneous rally at Mike Arroyo's office at the LTA Building in Legazpi Village, Makati. Carrying placards saying "*Gubyerno ni Arroyo, sindikato*" (Arroyo's government is a criminal syndicate), the rallyists condemned grave corruption in the regime.

On February 20, members of PAMALAKAYA staged a fluvial protest by parading their dug-out canoes from Cavite to the shores of

Manila Bay and later marched to the Senate building.

Protest actions were also launched in various regions. In Bicol, more than 300 persons held a prayer rally and lit candles as they listened to Lozada's testimony over the radio. Also in the rally was Lozada's elder brother and sister-in-law. The protest was led by the newly established *Krusada para sa Katotoohan asin Katanosan* (Crusade for Truth and Justice) composed of religious, progressive and academic groups.

Meanwhile, hundreds of persons led by BAYAN and the Promotion of Church People's Response also simultaneously lit candles at the Centennial Park in Davao City. An hour-long protest was also launched by about a hundred people in Cagayan de Oro City calling for Arroyo to step down.

A protest action was likewise launched in Tacloban City. In Cebu City, a rally led by BAYAN, Bayan Muna, Nagkahiusang Drayber sa Sugbo and youth-student and peasant groups was held. Up to 2,000 persons joined a prayer rally in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental in support of protest actions in Metro Manila. In Iloilo City, attorneys affiliated with the National Union of People's Lawyers (NUPL) and the IBP-Iloilo Chapter wore black armbands during court hearings to express their solidarity with the quest for truth and assail Arroyo and her ilk's contempt for the law.

Masses for Lozada organized by former Pres. Cory Aquino, De La Salle University and Ateneo de Manila University on February 17 and 18 were likewise huge successes. Up to 5,000 persons attended the "Misa ng Sambayanan para sa Katotohanan" (People's Mass for Truth) at La Salle, including Mayor Alfredo Lim, Rep. Jose de Venecia, former Senate President Franklin Drilon, Sen. Benigno Aquino III, Sen. Manuel



Roxas II, Makati Business Club head Ramon del Rosario and Fr. Armin Luistro of De La Salle.

In a statement, 71 former cabinet officials from the past three administrations called on members of Arroyo's cabinet to resign and divulge what they know of the anomalous NBN-ZTE transaction. Before the mass, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez warned that cabinet officials who would attend the gathering would be fired.

Graduates of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) circulated a letter demanding the resignation of PNP Chief Director General Avelino Razon Jr., a member of PMA Class 1974, for his shameless coverup of the Lozada abduction.

The ranks of anti-Arroyo forces continue to swell. Forty youth-student groups recently formed the Youth Forum to provide a venue for discussion and protest for their sector.

The Brotherhood of Christian Businessmen and Professionals called on Lozada and other government officials to continue being honest and divulge the truth.

Most recently, Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines president Archbishop Angel Lagdameo called for communal action and a new type of people's uprising to eradicate corruption in the country. He said lessons must be learned from EDSA 2 that ousted a corrupt president but installed a new president who was even more corrupt. Archbishop Lagdameo called for a "new kind of people power" that is not centered on personalities but on the people. He said it should involve collective vigilance by the people to prevent a repeat of the failings of past instances of people power. AB

## Advance a new kind of people power—CPP

In the face of growing possibilities that the Filipino people will once again be able to oust a reactionary regime through a people's uprising, it is important to draw lessons from EDSA 1 and 2 to ensure that putting an end to the US-Arroyo regime would result in significant changes that would be beneficial to the people.

The CPP issued this statement in support of calls by Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines president Archbishop Angel Lagdameo for a "new people power." Lagdameo made the call in the face of disappointments over EDSA 2 which installed Gloria Arroyo who ended up becoming one of the Philippines' most corrupt presidents.

The CPP agreed that the new people power should not be centered on personalities. Rather, it should ensure that the post-Arroyo setup would be marked by the democratic representation especially of the toiling masses. The new people power must determinedly fight corruption and have a clear program to address the people's demands for relevant political and socio-economic changes.

The people must grasp that although EDSA 1 and 2 were characterized by an explosion of people's power and were able to oust ruling reactionary regimes, they fell short of what the people needed. Even as unarmed protests and other mass actions are advanced, armed revolution must be thoroughly supported and advanced to finally put an end to the rotten ruling system. AB

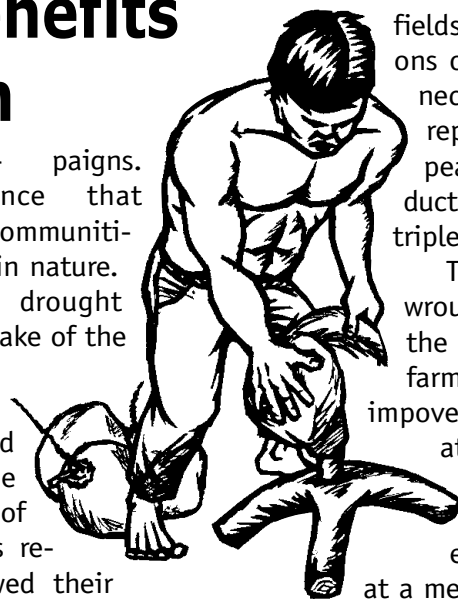
## Bicol farmers reap benefits of agrarian revolution

Rice farms and coconut groves in the Bicol region were battered by three successive typhoons in the latter part of 2006, sustaining heavy damage. Farmers were worried that it would take a long time before they could restore production. They could not expect subsidies or any other form of support from government. Even funds approved for release to typhoon victims were lost to corruption and used by incumbent officials for their

electoral campaigns. Any assistance that reached the communities was token in nature.

A long drought came in the wake of the typhoons.

Rice seedlings withered and died in the third quarter of 2007. Farmers repeatedly plowed their



fields because several sessions of land preparation were necessary in their efforts to replant their crops. The peasants' efforts and production costs doubled, if not tripled.

The natural disasters wrought further havoc on the lives of peasants and farm workers already deeply impoverished by severe exploitation. Usurers continued to impose exorbitant interests as farm workers' wages were pegged at a mere ₱80-100 per day.

## **Campaigns to raise production and for mutual exchange of labor**

To alleviate the peasants' and farm workers' hardships, the revolutionary movement advanced agrarian revolution especially in calamity-stricken areas. Campaigns were also launched for Red fighters to directly assist in efforts to raise farm production.

In a number of barrios in Sorso-gon severely hit by disaster, the New People's Army revived and encouraged *luyo-luyo* or mutual exchange of labor which was temporarily put to a halt due to the successive calamities. In their desire to immediately take advantage of the rains and till their own fields, the farmers faltered in the usually vigorous practice of *luyo-luyo*. The comrades strongly advised and encouraged the farmers, especially members of mass organizations, to undertake mutual exchange of labor because it would still be in their best interest. Practicing *luyo-luyo* lightens their work load and saves them time and money.

An NPA squad stayed in the barrio to encourage the practice and directly assist the peasants in preparing their fields to make them productive once again. The Red fighters helped in clearing the fields of debris and ruined crops. They also discussed ways of developing the land and improving crop production. They planted bananas around the field, to the farmers' delight.

The comrades likewise helped a farmer-caretaker plow a field owned by the revolutionary movement and prepare the land for planting.

Elsewhere in the village, comrades helped in shelling corn. It was a small gesture, but it saved the farmers a lot of time preparing the corn so it could be sold in the town center.

The barriofolk and the people's army also teamed up to repair an ir-

rigation ditch that serviced some 30 families. Red fighters and some 30 farmers restored the ditch damaged by Typhoon Reming. The comrades led in planning the repairs while the farmers solicited cement.

## **Campaign to reduce land rent**

The campaign to reduce land rent has met with many advances in many areas in the region. In coconut lands, a 70%-30% sharing system in favor of the peasants has been achieved.

In rice and corn lands, the prevailing sharing system is 90%-10% in favor of the farmers from the previous 75%-25% system in favor of the peasants. When the land is owned by rich peasants or members of the petty bourgeoisie, however, the revolutionary movement makes adjustments in consideration of their relatively lower incomes compared to landlords and in the interest of building the united front. A 50%-50% sharing scheme is implemented in the case of rich peasants and a petty bourgeois landowner would receive 60% of the harvest, with 40% going to the tenant.

## **Collective action and management**

There are areas in the region where the maximum program of distributing rights to till to poor peasants is already in force. These are areas where there are abandoned lands or where landlords have donated their lands to the revolutionary movement. These lands are controlled and supervised by the revolutionary mass organizations and distributed to landless peasants or those in need of more land to till.

On the whole, peasants in these areas have been successful in practicing *luyo-luyo*, raising production and developing the land. Their success is reflected in the va-

riety of products produced in these areas.

A town in Bicol where banana production is well-developed provides a remarkable example. Here, farmers have been able to produce various products from banana after comrades launched a campaign to discover what crops and side-products would be appropriate for the area. The Red fighters also campaigned for the implementation of multi-cropping and inter-cropping to maximize the land and produce other crops aside from coconut. The comrades constantly remind the farmers to avoid monocropping to avoid oversupplies that cause great reductions in the market prices of their products. They also teach the peasants to use organic fertilizers and pesticides as inexpensive means of enriching the soil, in addition to being environmentally-friendly.

There are also areas where farmers have successfully set up labor cooperatives. In these places, farmers have been able to accumulate various farm implements like sprayers, plows, picks, hoes and shovels. Members of the cooperative are able to use the tools for free or for a minimal fee—a big help to peasants who no longer have to rent them from merchants or approach exploitative usurers to borrow money to rent or buy the implements. Cooperatives have also been set up for animal dispersal, rice or corn mills and irrigation.

In another barrio, farmers were able to build a simple irrigation system for their rice fields from funds raised and construction materials solicited by their cooperative. They also collectively repaired wells for drinking water, and roads and bridges in their vicinity. They were able to take advantage of the previous election to solicit farming tools, seeds, and cement for construction from candidates. **AB**



## Surface and release NDFP consultants

**I**t has been a year since Leo Velasco, a consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines involuntarily disappeared after he was abducted by AFP elements in Cagayan de Oro. Velasco is just one of many consultants and staff of the NDFP who are victims of extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances perpetrated by the armed agents of the US-Arroyo regime since 2005.

Another victim is Angelina Bisuña-Ipong who was illegally arrested and has been in detention since 2005. In 2006, the following persons were abducted and have yet to be surfaced: Phillip Limjoco, Leopoldo Ancheta, Rogelio Calubad and son Gabriel, couple Federico and Nelly Intise and Prudencio Calubid, his wife and their staff.

Months after Velasco was abducted in February 2007, his wife Elizabeth Principe was arrested and detained. Emeterio Antalan and his companion Edgardo Frigal were likewise abducted. This 2008, Glicerio "Ka Choy" Pernia and Randall Echanis were arrested, detained and slapped with trumped-up charges. Echanis, who is also an officer of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, is an NDFP consultant on economic and social reforms.

The regime's ruthlessness towards these consultants is in outright violation of signed agreements with the NDFP. In particular, these are violations of the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and Inter-

national Humanitarian Law that are supposed to protect their rights and ensure their safety even when peace negotiations are suspended. The violations expose the regime's lack of genuine interest in the peace process and its readiness to use cowardly and cunning ways to suppress the revolutionary forces.

The NDFP, the CPP and the entire revolutionary movement demand the immediate release of all prisoners and the surfacing of all involuntarily disappeared consultants. The CPP and NDFP call on all progressive organizations and human rights advocates to press for the release and surfacing of these consultants especially since they perform vital roles in the peace negotiations. AB

### Military abducts 2 peasant leaders

MILITARY troops from the 70th IB and members of the Special Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit Active Auxiliary abducted two peasant leaders in two separate incidents in Central Luzon on February 8.

AFP troops took Nardo Serrano, leader of the Central Luzon Aeta Association (CLAA) from his house in Barangay Nabuklod, Floridablanca, Pampanga at around 9 a.m. Fortunately, barangay officials and his neighbors witnessed the incident and tailed them all the way to the military detachment at Macapagal Village in Barangay San Ramon in the same town.

When the barangay officials tried to retrieve him, however, the army refused, and even tortured Serrano. But his fellow villagers persisted until the soldiers were forced to release him that same day.

Earlier, Franco Corpuz, 41, chairperson of the Alyansang Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon (Alliance of Farmers in Central Luzon)-Nueva Ecija was also abducted in his house in Barangay Pandalla, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija at around 2 a.m. by four armed men believed to be elements of the 71st IB. He was released and brought back to his home in the evening of February 9. His captors threatened him and his family not to tell anyone of his abduction. Corpuz bore signs of torture.

### Mandaya tribespeople march against militarization

Over 100 Mandaya tribespeople marched towards Mati City (capital of Davao Oriental) on February 12 to demand the immediate cessation of intensive military operations in the towns of Boston, Cateel and Baganga.

The tribespeople railed against severe human rights abuses committed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines, including two incidents of helicopter bombings over their communities and forced mass evacuations. Up to 522 families or 5,000 individuals have been directly affected by grave abuses by the military—300 families from Baganga, 80 from Cateel and 112 from Boston.

The military also abducted and threatened Celso Asolog, Julius Gonzales and Tonyo Orfanel to force them to reveal information. They remain in military custody.

Alan Katubig of Sitio Borboanan,

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# Widespread protests confront Balikatan 2008

**M**ore than 20,000 demonstrators launched protest actions on February 18 in Pikit, North Cotabato; General Santos City; Cagayan de Oro City; and Davao City to condemn the ongoing 2008 US-RP Balikatan exercises in Lanao del Sur and Jolo.

The Balikatan exercises bring together some 600 Philippine and US troops who use "humanitarian missions" as a lame excuse for their continued presence. Meanwhile, around 6,000 US troops and 2,000 Filipino soldiers are conducting joint military exercises in different parts of the country.

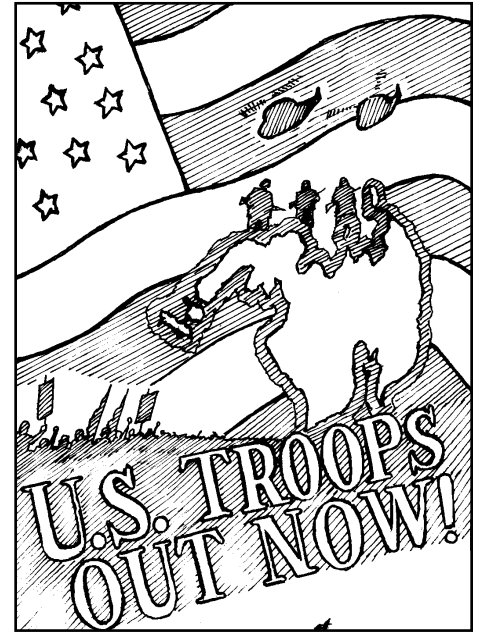
According to preliminary reports, almost 7,000 protesters marched in Kidapawan City and proceeded to Pikit. The cities of Cagayan de Oro, General Santos and Davao drew a crowd of 3,000 in their respective areas. Thousands also joined the march-rally in Central Mindanao led by Out US Troops-Mindanao Coalition. The rallyists also assailed Philippine Marines soldiers and US troops for their involvement in the massacre of eight civilians in Ipil, Maimbung, Sulu on February 4.

The fire of protests against the

Balikatan exercises has been raging for weeks. On January 21, more than 5,000 protesters gathered in Iligan City to denounce the Balikatan exercises. On February 16, residents threw stones at American soldiers aboard two vehicles while the latter crossed the National Highway in Barangay Malulot, Marawi City. The US troops were forced to return to Marawi Resort Hotel, where they were staying, but the angry activists still pursued them there. The soldiers belong to the advance party for the Balikatan exercises in Marawi City and other parts of Lanao del Sur.

Even before they arrived, hundreds of residents in the province had been staging protest actions condemning the joint military exercises. The protests are being led by the Ranao Crescent Against Balikatan Exercises (Racabe), a local group opposing Balikatan representing the 500,000 Maranao residents.

Even the local government officials have expressed opposition to the Balikatan exercises. "I support the sentiments of the people and I am opposed to the presence of US troops here," declared Mayor Fahad



Salic of Marawi City. The Marawi City Council filed a resolution stating its opposition to launching the Balikatan exercises in their area and pushed for the immediate withdrawal of US troops. Even Gov. Mamintal Adiong Jr. of Lanao del Sur, as well as leaders and representatives of various sectors are against Balikatan. The ARMM Regional Legislative Assembly has filed a resolution to junk the RP-US Balikatan exercises. A Congress resolution calling for the suspension of the Balikatan exercises has also been filed by 17 lawmakers from Mindanao.

Muslim religious leaders and a number of legislators from Mindanao led by Gabriela representative Luzviminda Ilagan called for the abrogation of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) which has allowed the unmitigated entry of US troops in the country.

Before this, elements of the AFP harassed organizers of anti-Balikatan protests in an attempt to sabotage their activities. They also barged into a forum organized by

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Barangay Kampawan, Baganga was illegally arrested on January 24, held for three days and forced to serve as guide in military operations.

Meanwhile, in Sitio Buko-buko, San Jose, Boston, elements of the 67th IB tortured Rene Boy Cubero and Motilo Latiban, covering their heads with plastic to compel them to disclose information on the NPA's whereabouts.

According to Ludinio Monzon, a Mandayan leader from Boston, there are sitios and barangays in Baganga and Cateel that have been declared "no man's land" by the military. Anyone seen in these areas is automatically shot by the fascist soldiers.

AB

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### Successful armed actions in Samar

A squad of Red fighters successfully defended itself against 14th IB troops conducting operations in Sitio Hitalinga, Barangay Tawagan, Arteche, Eastern Samar, on February 9 at 9:40 am. Earlier, on February 8, at 2:45 p.m., an NPA unit managed to escape after they were nearly encircled by enemy soldiers in Sitio Lunoy, Barangay Tawagan.

Meanwhile, according to the latest field reports, eleven high-powered armalite rifles were confiscated by Red fighters in a raid carried out on December 23 on the municipal hall and PNP station in Hinabangan, Samar. *Ang Bayan* had earlier reported that two rifles and three short arms were seized by the NPA in the raid.

### 77% of Filipinos want Arroyo to resign

SEVEN out of 10 Filipinos believe Pres. Gloria Arroyo should resign due to allegations of widespread corruption under her regime, based on the latest nationwide survey released by Ibon Foundation. With a respondent base of 1,503, the survey was conducted between January 7 and 14, 2008. In the same survey, 79.7% of Filipinos doubted the Arroyo government's claims of economic growth.

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US Troops Out Now!-Lanao Coalition on February 15 at the Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology and accused the students and teachers who co-organized the event of being communists and even threatened the students. They removed and tore down posters around the city of Iligan.

On February 17, government soldiers physically abused and fired gunshots at two students putting up anti-Balikatan posters around Cagayan de Oro City. They are also closely monitoring all anti-Balikatan gatherings being launched in schools in Cagayan de Oro City and Bukidnon. **AB**

### Tuition fee hikes in the offing

TUITION fees will definitely increase in the coming school year after the implementation of CHED Memorandum Order No. 13 (CMO #13) that effectively allows private school owners the liberty to increase tuition fees at will.

The memorandum had been suspended and was superseded by CMO #14 that requires consultations before the implementation of any tuition fee increase. Gloria Arroyo, however, ordered the reinstatement of CMO #13 in the first week of February.

According to the National Union of Students in the Philippines (NUSP), tuition fees have increased at an average of 12% over the last five years. Last year alone, almost 25% of private tertiary schools implemented tuition fee increases. Not only private but also public schools followed suit last year as in the cases of the Philippine Normal University and EARIST (Eulogio Amang Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology), which posted 100% and 600% tuition fee hikes, respectively.

### PNP files criminal charges vs suspects in Popoy Lagman murder

AFTER over seven years, the police captured and filed murders charges against suspects in the killing of Filemon "Popoy" Lagman, one of the opportunist renegades who broke away from the CPP and established his own faction in 1992.

The police filed charges against Brandy Nilo Gerona, also known as Ka Andy Garcia and seven others arrested in San Pedro, Laguna on January 19. Gerona and his gang used to be members of the RPA-ABB and are now members of a criminal syndicate. The police confiscated high-powered arms and explosives from the group. According to the PNP, the bullets from a .45 caliber pistol seized from Gerona matched bullets recovered from Lagman's body.

The AFP has long been blaming the CPP and NPA for Lagman's murder. Lagman was in fact assassinated by elements of the RPA-ABB after he took a bigger share of the payoff they received from PEA-Amari in exchange for facilitating the eviction of urban poor families living in a piece of property being claimed by the company.

The filing of criminal charges against Gerona by the police validates all official statements issued by the CPP that it had no involvement in the murder of Lagman and confirms its declarations that the real killers were his fellow renegades in the revolutionary movement who later became paid agents of the reactionary state and members of criminal syndicates. Lagman was killed in Diliman, Quezon City in February 2001.

## **Musharraf party routed in Pakistani elections**

THE party of dictator Pervez Musharraf suffered heavy losses in parliamentary elections held in Pakistan on February 18. The massive defeat of Musharraf's Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid is an indication of the Pakistani people's severe hatred for his oppressive rule.

The oppositionist Pakistan People's Party won the largest number of seats in parliament. Calls for Musharraf to step down as president have grown stronger but the dictator adamantly refuses to relinquish power.

A US scheme to mend factional strife within the ruling elite involves Musharraf's retention as president, with a duly elected opposition candidate assuming the prime ministership.

## **Maoist guerrillas seize 1,000 pistols in India**

RED fighters of the Communist Party of India-Maoists launched coordinated and simultaneous raids in various police stations in Nayagarh district, Orissa state, India, in the evening of February 16. The Maoists seized over 1,000 pistols from four police stations and the armory of a training academy. Thirteen policemen died, and many others wounded while a station was burned down.

Orissa is one of the poorest provinces in India where Maoist revolutionaries enjoy strong support from landless peasants. The Maoists, who trace their roots in this country to a peasant revolt in 1967, now operate in half of India's 29 states.